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SUBJECT: BASESCU IN BAGHDAD: ROMANIAN TROOPS STAYING IN IRAQ,  
COMPANIES HOPE TO COME

11. (SBU) Summary. President Traian Basescu made an August 9 trip to Iraq to emphasize Romania's commitment to stay in Iraq until the Iraqis ask them to leave. His meetings with Iraqi officials also focused on getting Romanian companies reconstruction contracts, both to further support Iraq and to undermine one of PM Tariceanu's arguments against Romania's continued troop deployment. End summary.

12. (SBU) President Traian Basescu paid a short visit to Iraq on August 9 to hold talks with Iraqi President Jalal Talabani, members of the Iraqi government, and the chief of the Multinational Coalition Forces, U.S. General George Casey. Basescu also met Romanian troops operating in Iraq and located in Talil, at Camp Mitica.

13. (SBU) In a joint declaration after the meeting with the Iraqi president, Basescu reaffirmed Romania's continued strong engagement in Iraq. Basescu said Romania wants to provide "political, economic, and military" support to Iraq and therefore "will pull out its troops when the Iraqi government makes a request in this regard and in agreement with the allies." The Iraqi president expressed hope that Romania would continue to be a reliable bilateral and multilateral partner until Iraqi authorities would be able to fully assume responsibilities in maintain order and provide stability and security.

14. (SBU) The two presidents also declared their determination to "intensify" the bilateral political dialogues through periodical meetings between members of the two countries' governments and parliaments. In the same context, President Basescu and President Talabani analyzed the potential involvement of Romanian companies in the reconstruction of Iraq. This issue was also addressed in the discussions with the Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri Al-Maliki and other members of the Iraqi government. Iraqi ministers said they would welcome Romania's participation in development projects related to agriculture, road and rail transportation, heating systems, oil refining, and armaments production.

15. (SBU) The local press made much of Basescu's inspection of Romanian equipment after a U.S. newspaper referenced American soldiers' bets on which day Romanian Aro vehicles would break down. The local press also commented on Basescu's interruption of FM Ungureanu's Austrian vacation to take him on this visit to Iraq and Afghanistan, since Basescu is currently at odds with Defense Minister Atanasiu due to the latter's sudden proposal to withdraw from Iraq.

16. (SBU) Comment: President Basescu is keen to repudiate calls by his Prime Minister (and political rival) Tariceanu for the early withdrawal of Romanian forces from Iraq. In addition, Romania is keen to get an economic return from its military investment in Iraq. Basescu likely focused on this theme due to private comments from Tariceanu's camp that Romania has not gained any economic benefits from its involvement in Iraq.

17. (U) Amembassy Bucharest's reporting telegrams are available on the Bucharest SIPRNET Website:  
[www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/bucharest](http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/bucharest).

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